

List of Claims:

1. (Currently amended) A nonwoven fibrous mat having a basis weight in the range of about 50 – 225 grams/square meter, the fibers in the fibrous mat consisting essentially of polymer fibers bound by about 16-30 wt. percent, based on the dry weight of the mat, of a formaldehyde containing polymer resin latex binder, the polymer of the polymer resin latex binder being selected from a group consisting of a latex polymer composed of ethylene-vinyl acetate copolymer, styrene-acrylic copolymer, vinyl-acrylic copolymer, styrene-butadiene-acrylonitrile copolymer, or acrylic copolymer prepared by emulsion polymerization of one or more acrylic ester monomers including ethyl acrylate, methyl acrylate, methyl methacrylate, butyl acrylate, 2-ethyl hexylacrylate, hydroxyethyl acrylate, hydroxypropyl acrylate, and hydroxyethyl methacrylate; acrylamide or substituted acrylamides, [;] butadiene, [;] styrene, [;] acrylonitriles, [;] vinyl acetate or other vinyl esters; carboxylic acid monomers or ethylenically unsaturated anhydrides capable of generating carboxylic acids, the binder containing a bisulfite compound providing a hot strength in the mat, at 200 degrees C., of no more than about 1 percent elongation, in the machine direction, the binder containing at least about 1.25 wt. percent and up to about 7.5 wt. percent of the [a] bisulfite compound, based on the dry weight of the formaldehyde containing resin in the binder.
2. (Currently amended) The mat of claim 1 wherein the polymer resin latex binder is selected from the group consisting of formaldehyde fortified latex polymers, the polymers selected from a group consisting which may be composed of ethylene-vinyl acetate copolymer, styrene-acrylic copolymer, vinyl-acrylic copolymer, styrene-butadiene-acrylonitrile copolymer, [or] and acrylic copolymer.

3. (Previously presented) The mat of claim 2 wherein the bisulfite is ammonium bisulfite in amounts of about 2.5 – 7.5 wt. percent.
4. (Previously presented) The mat of claim 1 wherein the bisulfite is ammonium bisulfite in amounts of about 2.5 – 7.5 wt. percent.
5. (Previously presented) The mat of claim 1 wherein the bisulfite compound is present in an amount of at least about 2.5 wt. percent.
6. (Previously presented) The mat of claim 2 wherein the bisulfite compound is present in an amount of at least about 2.5 wt. percent.
7. (Previously presented) The mat of claim 3 wherein the bisulfite compound is present in an amount of at least about 5 wt. percent.
8. (Previously presented) The mat of claim 1 wherein the binder is an emulsified styrene butadiene acrylonitrile copolymer latex.
9. (Previously presented) The mat of claim 2 wherein the binder is an emulsified styrene butadiene acrylonitrile copolymer latex.
10. (Previously presented) The mat of claim 3 wherein the binder is an emulsified styrene butadiene acrylonitrile copolymer latex.
11. (Previously presented) The mat of claim 8 wherein the polymer fibers are polyester, the bisulfite compound is ammonium bisulfite, the binder content of the web is in the range of about 16-24 wt. percent and the basis weight of the web is in the range of about 150-200 gms/sq. meter.
12. (Previously presented) The mat of claim 9 wherein the basis weight is in the range of about 50 – 175 grams per square meter, the polymer fibers are polyester, the bisulfite compound is ammonium bisulfite in an amount in the range of about 2.5 – 7.5 wt. percent,

the binder content of the web is in the range of about 16-24 wt. percent and the basis weight of the web in the range of about 150-200 gms/sq. meter.

13. (Previously presented) The mat of claim 5 wherein the polymer fibers are polyester, the bisulfite compound is ammonium bisulfite, the binder content of the web is in the range of about 16-24 wt. percent and the basis weight of the web is in the range of about 150-200 gms/sq. meter.

14 - 19. (Cancelled)